

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION COMMITTEE**

January 16, 2014

5:00 PM

**Mansfield Town Hall
Conference Room C**

MINUTES

Present: Steve Rogers (Chair), Mona Friedland, Curt Hirsch, Marty Hirschorn,

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm

Guest: Howard Kaufman with LeylandAlliance (by phone)

1. Call to Order

Steve Rogers called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes from November 14, 2013

There was no quorum to approve the minutes.

4. Recommendation of Committee Member

There was no quorum to recommend a new Committee member.

5. Review of Emporium Idea

Mona Friedland said she had met with Howard Kaufman at LeylandAlliance about the idea of an emporium model of commercial businesses for Wilbur Cross Way. Ms. Friedland said she had visited the Main Street Market in Middletown. The main attraction is the New England Emporium which is similar to Dog Lane Café. Mr. Kaufman said he had been there separately as well and said it is located in a thriving part of the main street in Middletown.

Marty Hirschorn asked who is responsible for the tenanting at the Main Street Market. Mr. Kaufman said there is a landlord. The set-up is with a single interior corridor. There are also offices upstairs.

Ms. Friedland said she also visited the Providence Arcade which had recently re-opened. She said it includes vintage clothes to custom jewelry to a coffee shop. Ms. Friedland said most of the spaces are 200 to 300 square feet and some businesses have two spaces. There are lofts on the 2nd floor.

Mr. Rogers said the question is how the emporium idea may fit into Wilbur Cross Way. The impetus to look at this idea came from an interest to create smaller, unique spaces.

Mr. Rogers asked if a layout on Wilbur Cross Way would have entrances to businesses from Wilbur Cross Way and behind Wilbur Cross Way. Mr. Kaufman thought there would likely be one entrance on Wilbur Cross Way. Mr. Rogers liked the idea of multiple ways to access the businesses. Mr. Kaufman said his thinking was that some businesses would not have a storefront. The more doors and the more specialized HVAC systems, the more expensive the construction and, thus, rents would need to be.

Ms. Friedland said she envisions the space on Wilbur Cross Way to be unique and a draw for people. A unified space could accommodate a lot of different businesses. She suggested that some of the criteria for businesses on Wilbur Cross Way may be uniqueness, reasonable cost, handmade, good quality. One example that would meet those criteria would be a higher end consignment shop.

Mr. Hirschorn asked what other businesses would belong in an emporium. Mr. Kaufman said an emporium would include a variety but what seems to have lasting power is a theme e.g., antiques or handmade items (knitters, jewelry, coffee, tea). A central place where people can sit down could be an attraction.

The Committee discussed the need to create energy on Wilbur Cross Way. Mr. Kaufman said more of the energy would be created closer to the intersection with Royce Circle, while the day care at the other end of Wilbur Cross Way serves a different purpose. Ms. Friedland said she envisions colorful glass storefronts that would draw people inside.

Mr. Kaufman said a 3,000 square foot space with 10 vendors may be preferable to an 8,000 square foot space with 20 vendors.

Mr. Kaufman requested assistance from the Partnership to recruit vendors, especially independent operators. Ms. Friedland asked if a Request for Proposal would make sense.

6. Update on Tenanting and Ideas for future Tenants

Mr. Kaufman said all space is leased in 1 Royce Circle. ThinkItDrinkIt should open in March.

Mr. Kaufman said the Leyland team is continuing to look at the idea of a brew pub.

Mr. Hirschorn suggested a place for dress shoes. Ms. Friedland mentioned that she had visited a shoe store in a plaza in Norwich which had a good selection of shoes (Shoeniverse?).

Mr. Kaufman said he wants to continue to explore the emporium idea and focus on a theme, and a strategy of where to recruit vendors. Mr. Kaufman will talk to their retail consultant at Charter Realty.

Mr. Rogers said the Partnership would need a marketing piece to use if it is recruiting i.e., a Storrs Center rendering with store layouts to show to prospective tenants.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.